

Making honesty a paying endeavour in African countries

Dr. Paul NTUNGWE NDUE

University of Yaounde II, Cameroon.

ABSTRACT

This paper argues that the failure of past efforts at promoting public service ethics stems from the failure to recognise that besides the conflict between self interest and common good, there is another kind of conflict- the conflict between an individual's craving for upright behaviour and the same individual's leanings. This conflict resides permanently in each human organism and sometimes accounts for inconsistencies in public service ethics. To the extent that this is true, the success of anti-corruption strategies will depend on the appreciation of the cross-pressures to which the individual is subject, and on the efforts made to assist the individual to resolve problems on the side of the larger public good. The underlying assumption here is that each person has in him/her the capacity to be upright or crooked- that is, the simultaneous inclination towards rectitude and decadence. A successful ethical reorientation strategy in the public realm would, as a minimum condition, join forces with other environmental factors to accentuate the positive, and overpower the corrupting, influence in the individual.

Key words: Ethics, corruption, integrity programmes

RESUME

Cet exposé soutient que l'échec des efforts antécédents pour la promotion de l'éthique de la fonction publique vient de l'absence de reconnaître qu'en plus du conflit entre l'intérêt personnel et le bien commun, il existe un autre type de conflit- le conflit entre l'aspiration de l'individu à un comportement honnête et les tendances personnelles du même individu. Il s'agit là d'un conflit permanent dans chaque être humain qui explique parfois des inconsistances en matière de l'éthique de la fonction publique. Une bonne stratégie de réorientation éthique dans le domaine de la fonction publique devrait, comme condition minimale, s'unir avec d'autres facteurs environnementaux pour rehausser le positif et subjuguier l'influence corruptrice inhérente dans l'individu.

Mot clés: Ethique, l'influence corruptrice

1. Nature, magnitude, and significance of the ethics challenge

In so far as it defines the rules of right and wrong, ethics cannot but be a subject that touches the life of every human being. It crops up in domestic discussions and is sometimes passionately debated in the public arena. Philosophers have ruminated on its essence and meaning. Poets have wrestled with its paradoxes. Theologians have taken (at times conflicting) positions on its true nature. Regimes have been toppled and wars have been waged over what constitutes appropriate responses to ethical questions. Saints and sinners have definite, even if antagonistic, views on the royal road to success.

Despite its pervading influence on human life, ethics did not enter into administration until the 1970s when the watergate scandal revealed the scale and depth of corruption perpetrated at the highest level of government in the world's leading democracy, the United States of America. It is true that contemporary public administration started with a normative theory of "good government. Wilson's celebrated essay on the study or administration made no pretension to absolute scientific neutrality. The aim of administrative study, according to him (Wilson, 1887 : 197- 198) was:

"to discover, first, what government can properly and successfully do (ends), and secondly, how it can do these proper things with the utmost possible efficiency and at the least possible cost either of money or of energy"

Thus, in the United States, the movement for civil service reform was inspired not so much by empirical analyses of government operations as by the ideals of good government espoused by the leading political philosophers, among them, Jeremy Bentham, Jean Rousseau, and Montesquieu. Liberal democracy ultimately provided the foundation on which rested the ethics of public administration in the United States and in other capitalist societies.

Moulding the individual public office holder in the image of his/her employer has been the goal of public service ethics project. Up to the 1970's, it was generally believed that only the developing countries of Africa, South East Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East were confronted with an ethical challenge –more so as they were invariably traditional societies just setting out on the journey to development and "modernisation". Primordial loyalties were still too strong in such societies to allow the public service to imbibe the norms of probity, professionalism, political impartiality, accountability, transparency, and responsiveness. Accordingly, the "development administration" movement focused on ways of eliminating the "ecological" barriers to the assimilation of the "rational", mostly Anglo-Saxon norms of public administration (Riggs, 1964; Easman, 1972;

Gant, 1979, La Palombara, 1963, and learner, 1958)

The Watergate scandal, as noted earlier, dispelled the illusion that the mature democracies were ethically above board. The scandal brought to light incontrovertible evidence of perverse exercise of power at different levels of the American government, leading students of public administration to show more than passing interest in the ethics of both the developing and the developed countries' public service. The collapse of communism in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe further reveals that ethical concerns now transcend cultural, political, or religious divides. Today, corruption is on the public agenda in places where it was once discussed in hushed tones. It accounts for the change of regimes or the defeat or once powerful political parties in countries as far apart (in terms of space, stage of development, cultural and religious belief) as Holland, Israel, Turkey, India, South Korea, Columbia, Philippines, Nigeria, Japan, Italy, and most recently, Germany (Klitgaard, 1988:10).

On the contrary, corrupt behaviour is not always so easy to pinpoint or to prosecute. By its very nature, corruption is a crime that is planned and executed in the darkest reach of the mind. To that extent, the "motive" is difficult to establish, and any evidence linking "opportunity" with the "act" may at best, be circumstantial, at worst, a huge fabrication. For example, a female aspirant to a position fails at the interview, and all the male panellists who once complimented her on her looks come under immediate suspicion. A top government official's relation wins a lucrative contract and it is all suddenly "because of her/his connections". A customs inspector impounds imported items, and the ready "explanation" is that s/he is sending signals for ransom payments (bribe, kickbacks, extortion, "family support allowance").

This is not to argue that corruption is a figment of the imagination. It is a real problem with devastating consequences. Corruption emerges in its true form when, on the basis of the information provided, evidence can be adduced that *manifest* plans have been vitiated by *latent*, and arbitrary moves – specifically, that the rules duly enacted have been applied to attain personal ends, or breached to frustrate public intentions. The World Bank (1997:99), for instance, defines "corruption" as,

"the abuse of public power for private gain... Corruption flourishes where distortions in the policy and regulatory regime provide scope for it and where institutions of restraint are weak."

Following from this, establishing or proving allegations of corruption requires that the "purity" of the decision-maker's "motive" be successfully contested. Con-

sidering the powers conferred on the average decision-maker by the bureaucratic ethos of hierarchy, secrecy, and “executive discretion”, this is a Herculean task. To prove that an impugned decision has been vitiated by “impure motive”, the aggrieved party has, as a minimum condition, to tender evidence showing in clear terms that a particular *act* does not accord with the *rules* governing it, and that the act has, *for reasons not provided for under the rules*, side-tracked “due process”. This further entails assembling information on substantive and subsidiary legislation as well as the implementation modalities spelt out in internal procedure manuals. Assuming that information on extant rules is readily available, the aggrieved party must establish that the *actual* interpretation and enforcement of the rules are tainted by impure motive. In any case, the motive becomes questionable when evidence reveals that “extraneous factors” had influenced the contested decision. All these underestimate the creative and rule manipulation capacity of the officials who are determined to hijack the decision process for private ends.

Forms of corruption

All the same, provided that laws on freedom of information are enacted and independent adjudication bodies are established, it is possible to verify cases of corruption. Let us, for instance, revisit the three hypothetical cases cited earlier, beginning with the frustration of the lady who “flunked” the job interview. Our female aspirant may be in the same situation as several unsuspecting individuals who respond to vacancy announcements which are meant, not to solicit applications (as the vacancies had already been filled ahead of the announcements anyway), but to fulfil legal or procedural requirements. Every action taken before, during and after the issuance of the announcement will anticipate the possibility of disputation, and will therefore be both “*pre-textual*” and *prejudicial*. A prejudicial act is essentially one that causes harm to others, regardless of the elaborate plans instituted to conceal the act or its harmful consequences.

If our lady is determined to unveil irregularities in recruitment, she could well begin with the vacancy announcement itself. On close observation, she might find that the “profile” of the beloved candidate – that is, the candidate in whom the recruiters would be very well pleased – boldly sketched somewhere in the announcement does not provide a clue, the criteria applied in short listing applicants would reveal the bias of the appointing authorities. The interview stage provides yet another opportunity to favour one candidate over another. A few vague, awkward, even downright irrelevant questions here, and some weird and arbitrary scoring of responses there, should place the favoured candidate at the head of the list.

Our lady might yet face another monumental obstacle’ of that getting the recruitment office to supply the information with which the integrity of the entire process could be verified. This is in addition to the *deterrence effect* of the colleagues’ disapproval and the superiors’ open hostility, as well as the general ineffectiveness of the internal grievance mechanisms. It is the same dilemma confronting individuals bidding for government contracts, or seeking compensation for public damage to private property – i.e., the lack of an “enabling environment” for the contention and review of highly questionable decisions.

With regard to the second hypothetical case, there is nothing wrong with the relation of a top government official competing for, and eventually winning, “lucrative” contracts. However, if the other competitors are able to prove that the official in any way used his position to influence the tender board’s decision, and the processes leading to the award of the contract were pretextual and prejudicial, they would have established a *prima facie* case of corruption. Again, how to assemble the necessary evidence in the face of the mutual protection habits of public officials is an open question.

The case of the customs official reveals the fact that corruption cannot succeed without the collusion of different parties – say, the members of an appointment and promotion committee or of a tenders’ board. And in the case of the customs official now examined, the giver and taker of bribes. By impounding and detaining in the customs warehouse, goods on which duties are still outstanding, the “diligent” Customs Inspector could always cite the relevant provisions of the law. To find out whether the reason for the seizure is the official’s observance of the law, as he claims, or his need for extra spending money, as is sometimes suspected, the owner of the items has two options before him. Specifically, he may choose either to pay the duty as stipulated, or “grease the official’s palm”. If the importer complies with the law while the customs official erects fresh barriers, the latter has dispensed with pretexts and has revealed his true intentions. If the owner of the impounded merchandise opts, in the first instance, for private “settlement” over payment of tax, the customs official has an opportunity to demonstrate his allegiance to the State by reporting the matter to his superiors. If the Customs Inspector and the importer reach a private agreement – that is an agreement outside the bounds of the customs law – corruption would have triumphed as a “normal” business practice. Determining the likely response to each situation requires that an empirical investigation be undertaken into motives, opportunities, and actions. It also requires a highly imaginative and unconventional research methodology, which is beyond the scope of this paper.

Besides the three cases discussed in the preceding paragraphs, it is possible to identify other manifesta-

tions of corruption. Certainly, it is a corrupt utilisation of public resources to deploy armed forces or police personnel on private "arm twisting" operations or debt collection assignments. Corruption may further take the form of inflation of contract prices, skimming of external aid resources, abuse of office, use of public resources/facilities for private purposes, failure to remove oneself from conflict of interest situations, sexual harassment, nepotism and favouritism, distortion and manipulation of rules, usurpation or vitiation of the roles of internal administrative structures for private ends, opaque and inconsistent application of rules, moonlighting, connivance at the evasion of civic and legal obligations, offer and/acceptance of inducements to subvert the law or to pervert the cause of justice, soliciting the assistance of powerful allies to circumvent rules and procedures for personal ends, participation in, or giving succour to, "mutual protection" rackets, and the use of state funds for private purposes.

CONSEQUENCE OF ETHICAL VIOLATIONS

Depending on its *form* and *gravity*, *corruption* is capable of rewarding indolence and penalising hard work, *undermining morale and esprit de corps*, compromising a Nation's external security, threatening internal order and stability, and generally slowing down the pace of economic growth and sustainable development. As an observer puts it (Klitgaard, 1988:3), corruption threatens "agency missions and the broader goals of national development." Certainly, corruption is at the root of the illegal importation of arms and ammunitions into, and thus, the destabilisation of political and social order in, a number of African countries (Casswell and Potgieter, 1998). When an applicant has recourse to the intervention of a godfather to secure a place in the police force, s/he is likely to remain beholden to her/his benefactor, and to sell law enforcement favours to the highest bidder. When the judiciary is rotten, law and order breaks down, while life and property remain constantly at risk. A vehicle licensing officer who retails driving licenses in return for easy money has exposed himself, members of his family and other road users to the consequences of reckless driving. A tax or customs bureau that can be easily induced to neglect its basic revenue collection functions cannot but share the responsibility for short-term fiscal and macro-economic imbalances and the perpetuation in the long haul of a nation's under-developed status.

Of course, it may be, and it has been, argued that corruption serves some "latent function" (Leff, 1979:329-333). First, it greases the wheels of commerce by allocating goods "according to willingness and ability to pay". Secondly, the favours dispensed in an otherwise corrupt system are part of the larger "arrangements" at

the integration of diverse communities. Thirdly, when the rules prove to be too inflexible and suffocating, managers cannot achieve programmed objectives until they operate outside these rules and apply creative solutions to problems. In any case, it is only the managers that have the professional knowledge to decide who is best fitted for what position or how resources could be most "productively" allocated.

Such an attempt to rehabilitate corruption is not likely to succeed nor is it desirable. In particular, the economic argument cannot be sustained in view of the issues of public morality raised by the "willingness"-and "ability-to-pay" concepts, and the conflict between the two. If willingness-to-pay is the basis of the law enforcement function of government, drug trafficking, homicide, and other forms of social transgression would be redefined by the forces of supply and demand, compelling society to revise in a drastic way, its notion of "right" and "wrong". Certainly, most of the existing crimes would have to be taken off the statute books as the police and the judiciary that are assigned the prosecution and adjudication tasks by society would already have been put on the payroll of new, mostly affluent private employers who might not necessarily share society's concern for the sanctity of life or the inviolability of personal proprietary rights. And where the "ability to pay" is the decisive factor, the poorest and the weakest segments of society would have to forgo their human and civic rights, since only those endowed with the resources would have the *ability* to pay for access. For scarce resources far from lubricating the engine of growth, corruption merely carves the economy into enclaves of privilege, leaving the disadvantaged groups with deep feelings of injury and despair. In its mildest form – that is, when its scope is limited to tradable goods – privatisation raises fundamental issues of fairness and equity. When extended to the public goods domain, it unabashedly glorifies the amoral tendencies towards greed, egotism, and callousness.

Experience reveals that national integration is the last thing on the mind of the dispenser of political spoils or managerial favours. As a matter of fact the "national integration" argument ignores the possibility that the authority conferred on a political decision-maker might be misused depending on the decisions-maker's transient mood and innate character. By placing the powers of patronage in the hands of a few, corruption transfers resource allocation decisions from the competitive, open market to, at best, a fickle-minded oligopoly, and at worst, a self-seeking monopoly. The accompanying distortions in political resource allocation lead to the impaired functioning of political communities, just as they result in market failure in the *economic sphere*, or performance shortfalls breeds large-scale political discontent, constitutional crises, civil strife, and, in extreme

cases, irredentism.

If the rules governing a particular decision are cumbersome or obsolete, the most logical thing to do would be to have them openly debated and amended. To allow individuals the freedom to decide when to comply with the rules is to confer unlimited licence on them without a prior guarantee of successful or beneficial innovation. As noted by Balogun and Mutahaba (1999:6), under the pretext of spear-heading change,

"twists the rule, manipulates established procedures, bends institutions to his/her will, but at the end of the day, falls terribly short on impact and overall value-added."

In any case, the rules are a means to the individual's ends. They are liable to be cited approvingly when they conform to the person's wishes, but thrown out the window immediately they appear to stand in the way of "Change" – no matter how nebulously this is defined.

A minimum degree of trust is essential to the success of any co-operative endeavour (whether it is business, government, or marriage). Trust can only be sustained if there are rules defining the rights and obligations of parties to a compact and serving as a check on opportunism or perfidy in interpersonal relations (Rowthorn, 1999:664-666). It is the rules which encourage each party (e.g., the worker in relation to her/his employer, a citizen in relation to government, and business partners in general) to invest time, energy and resources on *joint enterprises*, confident that the other party could not exit from commitments without paying a price. Where individuals are free to renounce obligations, different parties would spend more time looking for external opportunities and escape routes than in consolidating internal gains.

In response to the contention that the manager "knows best" who is fit for what job or how resources ought to be allocated, it should be stressed that modern organisations are too complex to be successfully run as personal fiefdoms. More often than not, they require a whole range of knowledge, skills and aptitudes that are definitely beyond the reach of a single individual or a narrow circle of officials. Suffice it to say that a system whose fate hangs on personalities rather than on rules is bound to disintegrate on the exit of its "strong man". Therefore, on simple, logical grounds, it is difficult to sustain any decision that leaves the *destiny* of organisations in the hands of super-men and super-women who disregard rules and accountability.

The methodological quagmire

It can be seen that public service ethics is an enigma. As a value-loaded concept, it does not readily lend itself to rational, scientific analysis. It is also a target that does

not stand still long enough so it could be properly dissected. What is ethical at a point may be unethical at another. Attributes deemed "praise-worthy" in capitalist countries will in all probability be roundly condemned as decadent in communist societies (Klitgaard, 1988:3). Among the various ethnic communities of Nigeria, it is 'bad' to commit murder or adultery; it is 'ungodly' to tell lies or steal; but all these moral codes apply only within a narrow, sharply defined circle of people (Balogun, 1982:51). Citing the Ibo as an example, Basden (1966:36) observes that if a crime is perpetrated outside the town area, the criminal who returns safely with large amounts of booty "will be congratulated on his success".

Science thus fails us when we are confronted with ethical choices. Indeed, as argued in this paper, the cause of understanding will not be totally served unless and until we acknowledge the infinite possibilities in the interpretation and evaluation of ethics. Using human character as a point of departure, the next section shows how an individual's evaluation of the choices open to him/her under different circumstances provides a clue to the conflicting responses to ethical dilemmas. This focus on individual choices contrasts sharply with the predominantly moralistic, ethnocentric, or ethical codification approach to public service ethics.

II. Ethics in government: an unconventional view

Analysts have focused on factors external to the individual – especially, the position taken by political and administrative leaders on public service ethics UNDP (2001:2). That leadership is critical to the success of integrity programmes is beyond doubt. It is behind the success of Hong Kong's "quiet revolution" (de Speville, 1998:30). It is the leadership category that would institute most of the measures that the World Bank (1997:99) deemed necessary in "restraining arbitrary and corrupt behaviour" in the provision of essential services – e.g., guarantee of judicial independence, separation of powers, and the strengthening of internal and external oversight mechanisms.

Yet, important as it is, leadership does not provide all the answers to the dominant ethical questions. In Hong Kong's specific case, anti-corruption measures succeeded not so much because of leadership commitment to integrity as the public acknowledgement of the *benefits* of clean government – i.e., the recognition on the part of the generality of the people that "honesty pays". As reported by de Speville (1998:29),

"The community of Hong Kong has come to realize that plain, hard work, business acumen, and risk taking have produced today's standard of living and material benefits. Equally it has come to realize that its achievements could not have accrued without arresting the cancer of corruption".

Leadership is thus a necessary but insufficient condition for the success of integrity programmes. Where the leader is genuinely committed to change, every action taken under his/her supervision will further the cause of ethics. Conversely, a declaration of commitment to "ethical rebirth" may serve as a cover for the perpetration of the worst form of ethical violations. It all boils down to individuals orientation.

Public service ethics: the conflicting signals

Public service ethics is a citizen-centred approach, that runs counter to the contemporary orthodoxy on public service ethics. It proceeds on the assumption that the State, as the embodiment of the common weal, is the institution endowed with the moral authority to legislate and enforce standards of acceptable behaviour. Flowing from this assumption is the hypothesis that as an employer, the moral code enacted by the State is the arbiter and legitimate authority when employees look for a guide on what is the "right", as against, "wrong" conduct. In defence of this hypothesis, it is further argued that each employee comes to the formal organisation with motives that are, at best, "different", at worst, selfish and anti-social. To this extent, the state is obliged to provide the necessary leadership in instituting a uniform standard of behaviour that overrides personal emotions, prejudices, and desires. As the World Bank (1997:99) has observed:

"The state's monopoly of coercive power, coupled with access to information not available to the general public, creates opportunities for public officials to promote their own interests... at the expense of the general interest"

The prevailing orthodoxy overlooks the possibility that the ethics of the State may itself be compromised by internal contradictions in public policy. A clear illustration is the fate that befell the leadership codes that were enacted in the 1960s and the 1970s – the golden era of State interventionism. These codes were meant to restrain the conduct of officials who had been entrusted with crucial responsibilities for economic management. Yet, by the nature of the responsibilities, the officials were also expected to acquire and apply entrepreneurial and modern management skills. In effect, therefore, the officials were confronted with a major dilemma – they either had to manage public institutions efficiently as dictated by the rapidly changing "market" forces, or to approach their tasks with utmost caution and as proper, rules-obeying civil servants. The officials who chose to be innovative and "results-oriented", had to step outside the bounds of the rules, and in many cases, of the ethical codes. Such individuals risked exposure to allegations of "corruption" Graham-Douglas

(1981), i.e., the one who suddenly finds him-self in a position of power and "thinks that he has all the answer to every problem".

At the opposite end of the spectrum is the quintessential civil servant – the one who would never move unless the rules explicitly permit or order him to. Yet, conformity to the rules is not always an adequate defence against another kind of accusation – the accusation of undermining the government's or the ruling party's development efforts. Like President Robert Mugabe (Balogun, 1992:26), many African political leaders have, at one time or the other, expressed dissatisfaction with

... "the bureaucratic nature of the public service system (and) its inability to yield decisions as quickly as we want..."

The Mohammed-Obasanjo regime in Nigeria was so disturbed by the work-inhibiting effect of the 1975 purge that it had to assure those untouched by the mass retrenchment that it was now safe to take vital decisions. As observed by the then Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters Brigadier (now President) Olusegun Obasanjo (1975), public officers had taken the purge as a signal to begin to apply "excessive caution in their work, to the point of paralysis."

If state intervention posed difficult ethical challenges, the divestiture process embarked upon from the 1980s aggravated rather than minimise these challenges. The latter process liberated the pent-up productive, it extolled as virtues the attributes (e.g., of acquisitiveness, greed, self-aggrandisement) that were once denounced and/or derided as vices. Under the attack of global "market forces", the State retreated from its erstwhile caring and compassionate position to one of cold-blooded "penny-pinching". Buffeted by the gale of economic liberalisation, the state shed its social responsibilities, and left the Invisible Hand with the challenges of "growth" and "poverty alleviation".

It will be quite illogical to expect the momentous shift (from "equity" to "growth") to be lost on the average public official. The interventionist State is constrained by several weaknesses but lacking in a moral orientation is not one of them. It is certainly liable to abuse its monopoly role and, for that reason, to misallocate resources. It provides a safe haven to corrupt and rent-seeking elements in the bureaucracy. It reacts too slowly to external developments and demands to be a reliable agent of change. However, as an entity reflecting the common weal, the State has at, least, forged an implicit bond with society – a bond guaranteeing "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" *in ways understood by the bulk of the people*. The phrase "in ways understood by the bulk of the people" is significant. In North America and other developed societies of Western Eu-

rope, the “ways” are essentially capitalist, while in Sub Saharan Africa, the State’s obligations are historically viewed as including caring for the weak and defenceless sections of society.

As soon as the State in Africa opts out of this social contract – one stressing the obligations of the State to secure maximum economic and non-economic benefits for its people – it runs grave moral risks. In the mind of the citizen accustomed to being cared for by the State, the latter’s retreat from its “traditional” role is nothing short of a breach of faith or apostasy. In the mind of the official, the State has, by surrendering to market forces, affirmed what it once denied – it has finally put a seal of approval on wealth accumulation. Whether or not to take advantage of this *volte face* then becomes a dilemma to be resolved by each depending on his/her notion of “right” and “wrong”. In general, the evidence available reveals a strong link between the implementation of Structural Adjustment Reforms and the growing incidence of ethical violations in the African public service (Mulokozi, Shellukindo, and Baguma, 1989; and Wamalwa, 1989; and Nti, 1989).

It is true that the individual public official is not a free agent. Liberalisation or not, the State reserves the right to set standards of acceptable conduct and to expect its edicts to be obeyed. It may declare as unethical or downright criminal, responses such as acceptance of bribes, gifts or favours; membership of Board of Directors of a private business enterprise; falsification of records; false declarations; over-invoicing; engagement in political activities; membership of secret societies, and nepotism. All the same, as long as internal conflicts of law are not swiftly resolved, the ethically flexible public official will continue to have a wide latitude to pursue personal goals at public expense. An example of this conflict is the affirmative action or “set aside” legislation that restricts eligibility for vacancies or procurement contracts to a narrow circle of individuals. Almost invariably, such legislation is supposed to be enforced in a “competitive” policy environment. However, by narrowing down the “eligibility” to compete, it not only restricts competition, but also confers wide discretionary powers on the public official – in effect, enabling him/her to use “public interest” as a cover for personal prejudice.

Individual character as a guide to ethics

The upshot of the preceding analysis is that public service codes by themselves provide but only a poor guide to the conduct of public officials. This requires that the conflict between the ethics of the State and the moral inclination of each public official be bridged. Super-imposed on this conflict is the conflict embedded in individual character. Indeed, the thesis of this paper is that at both the micro (individual) and macro (State) levels,

ethics is best understood as a constant struggle between right and wrong, with the outcome of the confrontation being decided, neither by the State, nor by leadership, but by the prevailing social forces. The dual and conflicting influences operating on the human mind explains the individual’s vacillation between rectitude and decadence. The average human being is at one and the same time endowed with the loftiest and the basest instincts. As the Qur’an (95:5-7) says:

“Surely, we have created man in the best form. Then we returned him to the lowest of the low. Except those who believe and do good deeds; for them is an unfailing reward”.

In likewise manner, the Bible (Genesis, 3:21) relates man’s fall from grace as follows:

“And the Lord God said, ‘The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live for ever. So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken’.

It is thus clear that no one is all good or all bad. The same individual is capable of displaying contradictory emotions and traits, depending on circumstances. While psychology (Freudian and post-Freudian) generally describes the attributes of a well-adjusted, as against, unadjusted personality, it has so far been unable to penetrate the fortress of conflicting human values. Psychology can paint a whole range of human emotions, but it can not “pass judgement” on them. Based on the teachings of the Qur’an, Imam Al-Ghazzali attempted centuries ago to identify and fill this void. The Qur’an, it must be remembered, traces human behaviour to the “state” of the heart (as against the brain). Thus, if the heart is “blind”, the clinically healthy eye will not see. Following this syllogism, AL-Ghazzali (Faris, 1962:41-46) distinguishes between two “states” of the human heart, i.e., the detestable or “diseased”, and the “praiseworthy”. The former condition is brought on by the individual’s responses to external stimuli. Where the heart is “diseased”, the responses will take the form of lust, avarice, hypocrisy, envy, haste, impatience, fear of death or poverty, discontent, deceit, conceit, arrogance, obduracy, constant fault-finding, paranoia, xenophobia, or the tendency to exult over successes and lapse into despair over setbacks. According to Al-Ghazzali, these “detestable states of the heart” stand between the individual and true happiness, and explain the frequent deviation from ethical conduct.

In contrast to the detestable states are what Al-Ghazzali terms the “praise-worthy” states of the heart.

Among these are fortitude; gratitude to, and fear of, God; contentment; endurance in the face of adversity; recognition of one's obligations under all circumstances; truthfulness; humility; penitence; contrition; courage in the face of danger; and preservation of emotional balance (i.e., refusing to exult over gains, and mourn losses, believing that gains and losses were pre-ordained). (Faris, 1962:41).

In much the same way, the Taoist school of Chinese philosophy acknowledges the possibility of emotion interfering with reason, and advocates the "dispersion" of the former with the latter. Also, Spinoza's Proposition ZLII accords with Al-Ghazzali's and the Taoists' observation on the relationship between external interference and "diseases" of the heart:

"The ignorant man is not only agitated by external causes in many ways, and never enjoys true peace in the soul, but lives also ignorant, suffer, ceases also to be. On the other hand, the wise man, in so far as he is considered as such, is scarcely moved in his mind, but being conscious by a certain eternal necessity of himself, of God, and things, never ceases to be..."

The conclusion therefore is that true happiness lies in insulating oneself from external influences, and using the "light of Heaven" to discover the unity that the earthly distinctions too often conceal. In essence, the right and the wrong are nothing but an endless change. It is one who stands above the fray that can justifiably lay a claim to ethical uprightness. Again the scriptures offer a guide here. The New Testament (Luke 6.37-41) contains the following moral injunction:

"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn and you will not be condemned... Why do you look at the speck of sand in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?"

The Qur'an (35:46) makes essentially the same point in a different way:

"And if Allah were to seize and punish human beings for what they do, He would not leave a single living creature on the surface of the earth. Still, He grants them respite until an appointed term; and when that appointed time arrives, they will know that Allah had them under close surveillance all along".

HONESTY PAYS: A summation and proposals for Africa

Defeating corruption is the aim of contemporary ethics and integrity programmes in Africa. Corruption cannot be totally eradicated. In the words of de Speville

(1998:35) decay and wholesomeness can only be "reduced and contained at a level where it no longer grows at the heart of —society"

Even with this limited objective African societies have to muster all the forces at their disposal to make an impact. At the minimum, attaining the "reduction and containment" objective requires that national consensus be built around codes and standards of acceptable behaviour, that appropriate legislation be drafted and passed into law, and that adequate measures are instituted to prosecute and monitor corruption cases.

Success is still not guaranteed unless the anti-corruption campaign is taken seriously by the State and civil society. In spread of haphazard, crash-bang, stop-go responses, the institutions must brace themselves for a long, hard struggle in the course of such a struggle, corruption would appear in different guises. Swift and decisive action should be taken to deal with each manifestation.

Education and Training

To consolidate the ethical foundation described above, steps should be taken to revitalize (and, if necessary, re-orient) the institutions which have always an active role in the moral education of children and adults. Besides the family, community development organisations, formal educational institutions and religious bodies, the various professional bodies should be encouraged to incorporate ethics into their "training" programmes.

The curricula of the Public Service Training Institutes should also be drastically reviewed with a view to integrating ethics and values into the training programmes. If the programmes are to have the desired impact, they should apply innovative training methods and expose participants to activities particularly of the 'man -o-war' type- which test, prior to strengthening, their capacities for physical endurance, resistance to mental stress, and decision-making in environments characterised by devilish temptations.

Staff selection, deployment, and career management

The war against corruption will be won or lost depending on the character and discipline of the people recruited to "fight" on the side of integrity. Corruption, it must be remembered, is a disciplined force that thrives on the violation of the generally accepted rules of decency. It relies on a tight network of clandestine operators and informers. Checkmating it therefore requires that attention be given to the staffing of offices whose function are critical to the implementation of the integrity programme. Such offices are in the central bank, the judiciary, the police, as well as in units responsible for personnel management, procurement and supply, finance and accounting, and internal audit. Besides focusing on the

qualifications and experience, the managers of the integrity programme should run background checks on candidates for vacancies in these key agencies, bearing in mind that one wrong choice may comprise the future of the entire campaign.

The chances that corrupt will seek to influence the selection and deployment of candidates into offices on the “opposing” side cannot be ruled out. The former will press every button to have “their man” confirmed and to keep out “crusaders”. This, a constable known for turning down “kolanuts” will retire on a desk job rather than being deployed to a “lucrative” beat. The same goes for a truly diligent customs inspector or immigration official, therefore if crooked cops get promoted all the time while the honest ones stagnate, the message that “honesty pays” will sound hollow.

Information for Transparency

Information is critical to the successful prosecution of anti-corruption battles. Ethical violations thrive most in circumstances where executive discretion “is backed with secrecy. It is therefore necessary that the laws in our countries be amended to allow individual aggrieved by decisions have access to the information they need to challenge such decisions.

Internal and External Audit of Administrative Action

To confer authority on a person without providing the necessary checks and balances is, at best, to sanction irresponsible behaviour, at worst, to give corruption safe passage. It is therefore important that lines of accountability be clearly delineated and reporting relationship properly defined, in our texts. Admittedly, it is not every allegation of corruption that can be sustained. And like every other citizen, the official accused of corruption should be presumed to be innocent unless proved guilty. Managers who claim to know what is “best” for organisations should at least submit their performance to periodic reality checks.

Besides the control exercised at the different levels to check the fairness and consistency of official decisions, organisations should establish bodies for auditing and reviewing decisions contested by aggrieved individuals. The internal review bodies would confine themselves to an examination of the evidence presented by parties to a dispute and recommending how the dispute could be amicably resolved. In contrast, external bodies such as *ad hoc* visitation panels and commissions of inquiry, or the permanent office of such as Public Complaints Agency, or Parliamentary Commissioner, would have the power to render judgement on cases brought to their attention and to order enforcement action. The decision taken by such judicial or quasi-judicial bodies are in the form of *res judicata*.

It is hoped that besides the internal and the external review bodies, the press, and civil society “watchdog” bodies would join in the struggle for the advancement of ethics and integrity, so that at the end of the day, it could be said that “honesty pays”.

References

- ALLEN, CHRIS, (1995), “Understanding African Politics”, Review of African Political Economy, 65, Balogun, M.J., (1982.) Public Administration in Nigeria: a Developmental Approach, Macmillan, London.
- BALOGUN, M J,(1992) “ Policy Management Training in Africa”, in G. Mutahaba and M J Balogun,(eds), Enchancing Policy Management Capacity in Africa, Kumaram Press, West Harford, 1992.
- BALOGUN M J, and MUTAHABA,(1999), “ Redynamizing the Civil Service for the 21st Century: Prospects for a Non-Bureaucratic structure “, African Journal of Public Administration and Management, Vol. XI, No. I, December 1999.
- BASDEN, G.T., (1966), Niger Ibos, Frank Cass, London.
- BUVUNIC, M., and AR MORRISON, (2000.) “ living in a More Violent World”, Foreign Policy, Spring 2002.
- CORNWELL, R., and J. POTGEITER, (1998)” Angola – Endgame or Stalemate?” Institute for security studies (Halfway House, South Africa), Paper 30, April 1998.
- DE SPEVILLE, B.E.D. (1998)” Hong Kong’s Quiet Revolution “, Governance, Vol. I. No. I, January 1998.
- EASMAN, MILTON J., (1972), Administration and Development in Malaysia: Institution Building in a Plural Society, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, N.Y.
- FARIS, NABIH AMIN, (1962), The Book of knowledge (translation of Imam Al- Ghazzali’s Ihya Utum Al Deen), Internation Islamic Publishers, New Delhi.
- GANT, GEORGE F., (1979), Development Administration: Concepts, Goals, Methods, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison.
- GRAHAM- DOUGLAS, N. B., (1981) “ The Position and Role of the Civil Service under the 1963 and 1979 Constitutions: a Comparative Study”, in M. Ade Soneye and M J Balogun (eds.) Report on the Workshop on the Relationship Between Policy Makers and the Higher Civil Service, ASCON Press.
- KLITGAARD, ROBERT, (1988.) Controlling Corruption, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- LA PALOMBARA, JOSEPH, (ed). (1963), Bureaucracy and Political Development, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J.
- LEFF, N.H., (1979),” Economic Development through Bureaucratic Corruption”, in M.U. Ekpo (ed.) Bureaucratic Cor-

ruption in Africa: Toward a search for Causes and Consequence, University Press of America, Washington D.C.

LERNER, D., (1958), *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.

MULOKOZI, B., W.H. SHELLUKINDO, and R. BAGUMA, (1989), "The Adaptation of Government to Economic change: a Case Study of Tanzania", in M.J. Balogun and G. Mutahaba (eds) *Economic Restructuring and African Public Administration*, Kumarian Press, West Hartford, Conn.

NTI, JAMES, (1989), "The impact of the Economic Crisis on the Effectiveness of Public Service Personnel", in Balogun and Mutahaba, *Economic Restructuring and African Public Administration*, op. cit.

OBASANJO, PRESIDENT OLUSEGUN, (1975), "Address at the swearing in of federal permanent secretaries and heads of department," *Daily Times*, 22 November 1975.

RIGGS, F W., (1964), *Administration in Developing countries: Theory of Prismatic Society*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston.

ROWTHORN, ROBERT, (1999), "Marriage and trust: some lessons from economics", *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 1999, 23, 661 – 691.

SPINOZA, BERNADICT, *Ethics and on the Improvement of the Understanding*, Hafner Press, New York.

UNDP (2001) *Public Service Ethics in Africa*, Vol. I. P.2

WAMALWA, W N, (1989) "The Impact of Structural Adjustment Programs on the Performance of Africa' Public Service", in Balogun and Mutahaba, op. cit.

WEBER, MAX, (1930), *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Unwin University Books, London.

WILSON, WOODROW, (1887), "The Study of Administration", *Political Science Quarterly*, 1887.

WORLD BANK, (1997), *The World Development Report 1997, (The State in a changing world)*, Oxford University Press, Washington, D.C.

Received 06/12/2002

Accepted 30/08/2002